



DYNAMIC LEADERSHIP

with

Aishath Shimani

Director of Planning & Development,
Sun Siyam Resorts

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Dear Readers,

A Happy New Year!

Welcome to the January 2024 issue of the Islandchief!

We are stoked, refreshed, and looking forward to this year with excitement as we continue to bring you stories, features and lots of interesting content to engage you. As we usher in 2024, we wish you endless abundance and prosperity and a magnificent trip around the sun!

This month, our cover story on page 12 looks at the captivating journey of Aishath Shimani, the pioneering Planning Director of Sun Siyam Resorts. From breaking barriers as the first Maldivian with a BA (Hons) in Interior Architecture and Design to revolutionizing spaces globally, her story reflects unwavering passion and dedication. Shimani's hands-on approach to construction projects and commitment to excellence define her as a visionary shaping luxury hospitality in the Maldives.

Furthermore, our culinary adventure, "Bon Appétit," invites you to discover the path paved by a culinary innovator, Chef Maha Naseer. Acknowledged as the inaugural Maldivian chef to be honored with the prestigious title of Master Chef by the Master Chef Society of the World, Chef Maha's odyssey through the tastes and scents of her native land serves as a profound source of inspiration. Find her exclusive recipe for "Lobster bisque with cured butter and bread" on page 22. Currently holding positions as a Board Director at MMPRC and serving as an Executive Chef and freelance F&B consultant, Chef Maha continues to leave her mark on the culinary landscape.

Finally, our industry stakeholders offer their invaluable insights in our "Frankly Speaking" segment, shedding light on a crucial concern. Yacht agents express genuine apprehension about the dwindling stopover visits to the Maldives by Passenger Liners, while the local boating industry underscores the issue of foreign yachts cruising in Maldivian waters without fulfilling Tourism Goods and Services Tax (TGST) obligations on bookings.

As you leaf through the pages of this edition, anticipate inspiration, and an unshakeable connection to the extraordinary stories and experiences that define the Maldives. Whether you're an intrepid traveler, a connoisseur of epicurean delights, or simply someone seeking a momentary escape, rest assured that our content has been meticulously curated with you in mind.

Here's to wishing you secure and joyous travels as you navigate the adventures that await in 2024!

Until next time,

The Islandchief Team



Mythical 'Paree Fengandu' in Laamu Gan

The Maldives, often dubbed paradise on earth, boasts more than just sun, sand, and sea. Scattered like gems across the ocean, the islands host a myriad of untouched natural attractions, including the intriguing "Paree Fengandu" or "Fairy Pond" on Gan island of Laamu Atoll. This freshwater pond, rare in Maldivian islands, holds historical significance, serving as a natural defense mechanism against flooding and other natural phenomena.

Gan islanders, proud of Paree Fengandu, share stories of mysterious occurrences, with sightings of fairies, spirits, and mythical creatures near the pond. Linked to mythical fables, the pond was once believed to be bottomless, though measurements revealed a depth of 28-30 meters, making it the deepest pond in any Maldivian island. Surrounded by lush greenery, box-fruit trees, and mangroves, Paree Fengandu's picturesque setting, adorned with vibrant hues, invites visitors to explore its enchanting beauty, alongside the rich history of Gan island.

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Etihad and Maldivian Announce Interline Partnership



Etiha Airways, the national airline of the UAE, and Maldivian have unwrapped an early Christmas present for customers by announcing a strategic bilateral interline partnership, unlocking access to 16 dream holiday destinations in the Maldives beyond the main island of Malé.

The agreement between Etihad and Maldivian, the national airline of the Maldives, means guests can now seamlessly navigate across the Indian Ocean archipelago, enjoying the combined services

and networks of both carriers on a single ticket.

Etihad's Chief Revenue Officer, Arik De said: "This interline will elevate the overall customer experience across the entire journey. Guests bound for the Maldives will enjoy the privilege of arriving at their popular holiday destinations with greater ease. Facilitated by smooth connections from Malé, Etihad customers can easily transition to Maldivian's services, reaching a wide range of domestic destinations to begin

their idyllic island retreat."

Maldivian's General Manager Commercial, Ibrahim Hamdhan Mohamed said: "In an effort to expand Maldivian's reach globally, this interline partnership with Etihad Airways will open exciting opportunities for our valued customers to connect and travel seamlessly within our strong and growing route network of destinations across the Maldives."

Etihad customers can access destinations

on Maldivian's network, which serves many popular islands, via Velana International Airport, Malé, including: Dharavandhoo Island (DRV), Faresmathoda Airport (FMT), Funadhoo Airport (FND), Fuvahmulah Island Airport (FVM), Gan Island Airport (GAN), Kooldoo Island (GKK), Hanimaadhoo Island Airport (HAQ), Kulhudhuffushi Airport (HDK), Hoarafushi Airport (HRF), Kaadedhdhoo Island Airport (KDM), Kadhdhoo Island (KDO), Madivaru Airport (LMV), Maafaru International Airport (NMF), Maavarulu Airport (RUL), Thimarafushi Airport (TMF), and Ifuru (IFU). Etihad is set to increase the frequency of its flights to Malé to connect with the Maldivian network from 10 to 14 a week starting on January 1, 2024.

The agreement also makes it even easier for customers to combine their dream break in the Maldives with an exciting stopover in Abu Dhabi, savoring the legendary hospitality and remarkable attractions of the UAE's capital.

The interline agreement with Maldivian is just the latest in Etihad's expanding network of partnerships with airlines worldwide, delivering enhanced connectivity and convenience for its guests.



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ACROSS THE SKIES

Maldivian to Introduce Wide-body Airbus A330s in 2024

Maldivian, the national carrier of Maldives, has recently initiated a wide-body project to expand its long-haul routes to destinations such as China and Europe.

Today following the cabinet meeting, the President's Chief spokesperson Mr Mohamed Shahyb said financial agreements have been facilitated to Island Aviation Services in order to commence wide body operations.

Mr Shahyb further added that flights to

China are of top priority and that agreements have been met with Maldives Airports Company Limited (MACL) to prove lower fuel charges, parking fees, and handling and navigation fees in order to assist Maldivian in launching this operation.

Earlier this year in February Maldivian sought proposals to dry lease two Airbus A330-200s for a period of six years. At present the carrier operates with a single narrow-body Airbus A320 which limits both



the number of passengers carried and operable routes.

The addition of wide-body aircraft would

immensely boost Maldivian's capacity to reach additional destinations and compete with existing operators in the competitive international airline market.

Emirates Skycargo to Build on 2023 Successes and Advance Its Long-Term Strategic Growth Plans



Emirates SkyCargo, the cargo arm of the world's largest international airline, wraps up a major year of growth and investment in both its current and future operations. Signaling its confidence in the essential role air cargo will continue to play in global trade, the airline has made significant leaps towards its long-term strategic growth plans to double capacity in the next decade, and further cement its leading position in global air logistics.

Nabil Sultan, Divisional Senior Vice President, Emirates SkyCargo said: "2023 was a pivotal year for Emirates SkyCargo. Despite ongoing fluctuations in air freight, long-term trends indicate that the industry is growing at a rate of 3 – 5% year-on-year. Emirates SkyCargo, however, continues to outperform the market growth, uplifting over 1,183,000 tonnes from January to mid-December, a solid 7% increase compared to last year. Looking to the future, we are well-positioned to steadily scale up operations in 2024, continuing our strategic growth to ensure we lead the industry in solutions that are fast, reliable, flexible, and efficient."

Reaching every corner of the globe

In line with the Dubai Economic Agenda (D33) Emirates SkyCargo is on a journey to grow Dubai's position as the world's largest logistics hub, expanding its fleet and network to better serve global customers. In Q1, Emirates SkyCargo leased two Boeing 747-400Fs, unlocking immediate additional cargo space in response to high customer demand. These aircraft join its fleet of 11 Boeing 777Fs and 251 passenger aircraft.

Further expansion is on the horizon, with four new 777-200 Fs expected in 2024 and a fifth aircraft in 2025. This order is in addition to 310 wide-body passenger aircraft that Emirates has on the order book, which will see deliveries of new aircraft, and new cargo capacity, through to 2035. Building on its competitive global connectivity, Emirates SkyCargo extended its reach in Canada and North America through a strategic interline cooperation with Air Canada Cargo. Customers are now able to book shipments that will travel on Air Canada Cargo flights via e-SkyCargo, expanding Emirates SkyCargo's reach to over 60

cities in Canada and more than 150 cities globally.

Ever-evolving product portfolio

In May, Emirates SkyCargo reinforced its multi-vertical product portfolio, with the launch of two new bespoke products under its Life Sciences and Healthcare vertical. Addressing specific transportation challenges in healthcare, Emirates Vital is a specialist product designed to transport clinical trials, cell and gene therapies, and human samples, while Emirates Medical Devices enables the transport of everything from pacemakers to MRIs, following GDP specifications. Since launch, Emirates SkyCargo has uplifted almost 1,000 tonnes of highly sensitive cargo, using these two products alone. Emirates Delivers expanded operations to Kuwait, providing door-to-door international delivery of items purchased from the UK and the US to savvy e-commerce shoppers. Recognising the opportunity in the wider Middle East region which has previously been underserved when it comes to e-commerce shipments, Emirates Delivers is preparing to significantly scale in 2024, offering fast, reliable, and cost-effective delivery solutions.

Advancing digitalisation strategy

Throughout 2023, Emirates SkyCargo helped shape the digital landscape for cargo operations. In addition to its own online booking platform on e-SkyCargo, the airline's capacity is now available on two of the biggest digital marketplaces, CargoAi and WebCargo with plans to further expand its digital footprint in early 2024. In October, Emirates SkyCargo launched a landmark host-to-host connection with global freight forwarder, Kuehne+Nagel, providing direct access to its

market-leading products and services on Kuehne+Nagel's internal booking engine.

New brand umbrella

Reflecting Emirates SkyCargo's wider contribution to global trade, the airline launched a new campaign showing how 'The World Works Better with Emirates SkyCargo'. Disrupting the traditional USP-focused advertising of the cargo industry, The World Works Better has become the mantra by which Emirates SkyCargo operates, providing tangible impact to people and businesses all over the world.

Extending a lifeline to global communities

Committed to driving positive impact in the communities it serves around the world, Emirates SkyCargo is no stranger to humanitarian missions. Following the devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Syria in February, Emirates SkyCargo, in collaboration with the International Humanitarian City (IHC) swiftly established an airbridge to Istanbul. Dedicating cargo space on its daily flight to Istanbul across a two-week period Emirates SkyCargo and IHC ensured a steady flow of emergency supplies to on-ground NGOs.

More conscious operations

Emirates SkyCargo continues to focus on meaningful sustainable and environmental initiatives that drive impact, both in its own operations and across the industry. From on-ground programmes that ensure 75% of all plastic sheeting in the airline's Dubai-based facilities is recycled through to optimizing the way aircraft is loaded, more environmental and sustainably conscious operations will remain a priority for Emirates SkyCargo through to 2024 and beyond.

IN A NUTSHELL

Siyam World Maldives is Spicing it up Once Again with the Opening of the New Maldivian Restaurant, Kaage



Siyam World, Maldives has introduced “back to the roots” cuisine and opened a signature Maldivian restaurant showcasing delicacies and dishes from different atolls of the Maldives. “Kaage,” is a traditional Maldivian restaurant where the rich taste of Maldivian heritage comes alive through the delectable flavors crafted from traditional Maldivian kitchens. Guests at Siyam World can now be immersed in the vibrant history of the Maldives with the authentic essence of Maldivian cuisine that brings together the unique tastes from the southern atolls to the northern reaches of the Maldives.

Kaage boasts a menu that pays tribute to the time-honored recipes passed down through generations. Our chefs are steeped in the culinary wisdom of our ancestors, recreating the magic of Maldivian home-cooked meals, capturing the very soul of the islands. The head chef, Mohamed Rasheed took time to travel to the different atolls in the Maldives to learn the old recipes and bring it to life with his own creative touches at the “Kaage” restaurant. Chef Rasheed lived in Germany for 15 years and moved back to the Maldives in 2021. He joined Siyam World in December of 2022 and began his Maldivian culinary journey to learn and perfect the traditional recipes that were passed down from generations.

“I have always wanted to go back to my roots and experiment with traditional Maldivian dishes and I have always wanted to come back home to the Maldives and work in a resort. Growing up, I used to help my mother prepare meals and watch her make them, which inspired me to become a chef. When I got the opportunity to help create a unique Maldivian restaurant, I jumped right on it and began my journey in creating a unique yet authentically Maldivian menu,” says Chef Rasheed.

“Kaage ” the signature Maldivian restaurant is included in the resorts’ unbeatable WOW! 24-hour premium all-inclusive plan. With the inclusive dine around concept, guests at Siyam World now have the option to dine around 6 speciality restaurants including Spanish, Italian, Thai, Indian, Grill restaurant and the latest addition, Kaage. Forget monotonous dining, spoiled for choice, Siyam World boasts an array of dining options to suit every taste bud.

Siyam World is an unapologetically quirky, all-embracing five-star all-inclusive island destination that transcends cultures and borders to offer guests an ever-expanding array of ‘never-seen-before’ experiences – from the Indian Ocean’s biggest floating water park to the Maldives’ first resort horse ranch. The natural 54-hectare island resort boasts an enticing variety of 18 accommodation categories ranging from 89 to 3,000 square metres, from lush Pool Beach Villas, expansive Beach Suites and breathtaking Beach Residences to playful overwater Villas complete with irresistible water slides. An exclusive enclave, The Residences at Siyam World, also features stunning Grand Water Pavilions and 1-4-bedroom residences with private pools. All accommodation types overlook the pristine Maldivian waters, come with direct access to the ocean and feature generously proportioned indoor and outdoor living spaces with private pools.

Located in Noonu Atoll, Siyam World, Maldives is a mere 40 minutes’ direct seaplane ride from Velana International Airport, and also accessible via a 30-minute domestic flight to Maafaru Airport followed by a 10-minute speedboat trip.



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Island Luxury Maldives Unveils Exclusive Local and Expat Rates for Unforgettable Getaways

Island Luxury Maldives, the epitome of opulence and environmental sustainability in the Maldives, is thrilled to introduce exclusive Local and Work Permit Rates for both of its distinctive properties – Fulhadhoo Boutique Hotel and Dive Hotel.

Island Luxury Fulhadhoo Boutique Hotel: A Fusion of Opulence and Tradition

Island Luxury Fulhadhoo Boutique Hotel stands as the epitome of its brand, a sanctuary of lavishness and refinement intricately designed to cater to the most discerning guests. What sets them apart is their dedication to showcasing traditional Maldivian craftsmanship through the hotel's design, infusing the space with the rich heritage and artistry of the Maldives.

Its exceptional service goes beyond the ordinary, offering you a stay that not only embodies luxury but also provides a genuine connection to the authentic craftsmanship and culture of the Maldives. Its elegantly appointed

rooms seamlessly blend comfort and opulence, with each accommodation thoughtfully curated to create a haven of tranquility, complemented by breathtaking views, sumptuous food and the luxury of infinity pool, spa and private catamaran.

Island Luxury Dive Hotel – Where Luxury Meets Adventure

Also nestled on Fulhadhoo in Baa Atoll, Island Luxury Dive Hotel is embraced by pristine, crystal-clear turquoise waters teeming with marine wonders. Its generously appointed and spacious accommodation which include outdoor bathrooms, coupled with unparalleled hospitality and access to the Pool Cafe, position us as the top choice for travelers seeking an adventurous escape.

The Dive Hotel also features a dive centre, aptly named “The Underwater Institute”, which takes pride in offering a variety of diving experiences and educational programs suitable for all skill levels, ensuring personalized attention and a



secure and enjoyable learning experience.

Whether you crave an exhilarating underwater adventure, a private beachfront dinner under the stars, or a guided exploration of local Maldivian culture, our team at Island Luxury Maldives is dedicated to crafting an experience that aligns with your

preferences. Every aspect of your stay is meticulously designed to allow you to enjoy the beauty of the Maldives in a way that resonates with your individual tastes and desires.

To make reservations or seek further information, please contact via email at info@islandluxury.mv or call at +960 7772458.

COMO Cocoa Island Opens Its First Ever Pop-Up Dining Experience, The Konro Grill and Bar



The Konro Grill and Bar, a special pop-up restaurant serving delectable yakitori and an exquisite sake bar is now open on COMO Cocoa Island. Available from now to April 10th 2024, the pop-up brings together the art of yakitori and a remarkable sake bar.

Nestled on Faru Beach, this unique dining experience promises a fusion of Japanese flavors amidst the picturesque backdrop of the island's powder soft white beaches.

Experience the tantalizing aromas of fresh vegetables, meats, and seafood skewers, expertly grilled on a traditional Konro grill right before your eyes. Designed to delight the palette, guests can savor premium Tajima Wagyu with beautiful marbling that gives the meat a rich, buttery flavor; Glacier 51 Toothfish, sometimes referred to as the wagyu of the sea, with its delicate sweetness; and brussels sprouts with miso and dancing bonito for extra umami.



Enthusiasts of Japanese spirits can indulge in a curated selection of premium sake, including the illustrious IWA 5 Assemblage 2, Junmai Daiginjo crafted by Richard Geoffroy, former Chef de Cave at Dom Pérignon. Additionally, Japanese beers and inventive cocktails, such as The Green Konro signature cocktail, featuring Shirataki “Pink” Jukusei no Jozen Mizunogotoshi, Midori liqueur, pineapple juice and Scrappy's Bitters, promise an unparalleled sensory

experience.

Open from afternoon until late, enjoy stunning views of the beach, especially during sunset or under a star-studded sky. Immerse yourself in the enchanting atmosphere of this purpose-built pop-up restaurant, crafted entirely from local materials, aiming to bring the quintessential Japanese food-cart experience to life amidst the tropical paradise of COMO Cocoa Island.

Hideaway Beach Resort & Spa Unveils Its New Fitness Center Upgrade with a Dedicated Yoga Space and Introduces Badminton

Hideaway Beach Resort & Spa, renowned for its commitment to providing unparalleled luxury and experiences, is pleased to announce its latest enhancements in health and wellness offerings, solidifying its position as a premier destination for those with an active lifestyle seeking a holistic and rejuvenating getaway.

The jewel in the crown of these updates is the comprehensive upgrade to the resort's Fitness Center. Meticulously designed to cater to the diverse wellness needs of guests, the gym now boasts state-of-the-art equipment and an extension that includes a dedicated yoga space, known as the Wellness Studio. This addition provides an idyllic setting for guests to embark on their wellness journey, offering a serene atmosphere for yoga and meditation practices. The resort has also recently added Indoor Badminton courts to their offerings list so guests can sweat it out in the courts.

Hideaway guests are inspired to cleanse, restore, and energize their body and mind. To enable guests to work out on their own schedule, the Fitness Center is open 24 hours. With a variety of state-of-the-art exercise equipment including free weights, Stairmasters, stationary bicycles, treadmills, and more, guests are spoilt for choice. Additionally, thanks to the well thought out entertainment systems such as cable TV and Audio music systems, guests can keep current with worldwide news and sports or go full blast with their favorite tunes at play.

The new building also houses showers and changing facilities, so you can complete your cooldown routine at the gym without having to return to your villa. The facilities are available for all guests (children under 12 to be accompanied by an adult) to use free of charge, and our team members are on hand to help out and provide introductions to any



equipment you may be unfamiliar with. Hideaway Beach Resort & Spa enhances its fitness offerings with the introduction of diverse group classes like Zumba, Tabatha, and Step Aerobics at their new Wellness Studio. These additions, led by a highly experienced Gym & Wellness Instructor, promise an engaging and comprehensive fitness experience for guests.

Hideaway is not just a retreat; it's an oasis for sports enthusiasts. In addition to the Fitness Center upgrade, the resort has expanded its array of indoor and outdoor sports facilities. The resort's Sports

Complex also includes 2 tennis courts, 1 padel court, 1 half-basketball court, 1 beach volleyball area, 1 Golf Center which has 2 golf simulators and 1 putting green, the new Badminton Center which has 2 badminton courts, 1 soccer field, and professional assistance for various sports with the help of our Sportsmaster and some Pro Coaches for select sports at the resort.

Staying fit whilst holidaying at Hideaway doesn't have to be restricted to the gym. You can jog around the beautiful, scenic island or ride the bicycles that you will be provided with at your villa.



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Ganna Kryvoguz Appointed as Director of Sales & Marketing at Le Meridien Maldives Resort & Spa



Le Méridien Maldives Resort & Spa is delighted to introduce Ganna Kryvoguz as its newly appointed Director of Sales & Marketing. Boasting an impressive career of over a decade in the ever-evolving hotel industry, Ganna brings a wealth of experience and expertise to this key leadership position.

Throughout her professional journey, Ganna has consistently demonstrated a deep understanding of market dynamics and a proven ability to implement innovative sales and marketing strategies that enhance both business development and guest experiences at the properties she has managed. Her passion for hospitality and commitment to excellence align seamlessly with Le Méridien Maldives' unwavering dedication to delivering exceptional guest service.

"We are excited to announce the addition of Ganna Kryvoguz to our esteemed leadership team," remarked Thomas Schult, General Manager at

Le Méridien Maldives Resort & Spa.

"Her extensive expertise in the industry and in the Maldives, coupled with a strategic business acumen make her a valuable asset to our resort. With her at the helm, we are confident in our ability to enhance our market position and further elevate our reputation as one of the leading holiday destinations in the Maldives."

Hailing from Ukraine, Ganna embarked on her career as a Front Office Manager at Hotel Dakkar in her homeland. Progressing through the ranks, she ascended to the role of Hotel General Manager in the biggest local hotel chain in Ukraine before moving to the Maldives as a valuable member of the Minor Hotel Group's Central Reservations Team. Prior to joining Le Méridien Maldives, Ganna held the position of Regional Sales & Marketing Manager at Crown & Champa Resorts where she successfully oversaw a portfolio of more than 10 properties in the country.

Laurent Driole Appointed as Resort Manager of Lily Beach Resort & Spa

In an exciting and strategic move, Lily Beach Resort & Spa formally announces the appointment of seasoned hotelier Laurent Driole as its new Resort Manager. With an illustrious career spanning over twenty-five years in the hospitality industry, Driole brings a wealth of expertise and a passion for delivering unparalleled guest experiences to the pristine shores of Lily Beach.

Hailing from France, Driole's incredible academic excellence includes an MBA from the French business School ESSEC and a joint program in International Hospitality Management from Cornell. Driole's experience in the industry began in the Food and Beverage industry, laying the foundation for his future career in the hospitality industry. His first position in the Maldives was in 1996 as a F&B Manager at Farukolhu Fushi which helped position himself in the F&B department, where his passions lay. He has since worked his way up the career ladder, holding positions in prestigious establishments such as Les Bains Paris, The Reverie Saigon, Swissotel Moscow, The Westin Paris, Radisson Nice, and Eco resorts in Borneo. Each experience further laid the groundwork for his next chapters, helping him understand the industry and his ability to thrive in various

cultural contexts.

As Resort Manager at Lily Beach Resort & Spa, Driole's strategic initiatives align with Lily Beach's unwavering commitment to excellence. "This involves placing an even greater emphasis on service standards, with a keen focus on the details to ensure every stay at the resort is a memorable one for each and every guest from all-around the globe. Food is at the heart of Lily Beach, with the experienced F&B team at the resort I intend to ensure food quality is kept at the highest standards as we are very particular with sourcing the right ingredients from the best sources from around the world and creating great buffet and a-la-carte dining experiences at the resort. I also aim to create opportunities for guests to experience the rich culture of the Maldives by further improving the various cultural experiences available at the resort such as the weekly Culture Night where we bring culture to the guests here with help of nearby local islanders providing a taste of truly Maldivian experiences and we bring guests to local island for an immersive cultural exchange." Driole explained, "my motivation isn't just about personal success, but it is also about leading and inspiring talented and



passionate teams."

As the Festive Season is upon us, Driole has worked hard with his extraordinary team at Lily Beach to offer guests an incredible array of activities and events to celebrate this special time. This includes special VIP dinners by Michelin Star Chef Jenö Racz, an ensemble Live Music collaboration, and many more.

The team at Lily Beach is delighted to welcome Driole onboard, to work with him and to have him at the helm in steering the award-winning resort to

new heights and keep on top of what is done best by Lily Beach – in providing a great home away from home experience with great value due to its generous Platinum Plan and impeccably authentic service.

2024 is an especially big year as Lily Beach will be celebrating its 30th anniversary and so the island will be celebrating big. No doubt that Driole and his hardworking team will put on a stellar celebration to commemorate the event. All the upcoming events, and details will be announced on the website and social media as it goes.

JA Resorts & Hotels Appoints Khumar Askerova as Director of Sales and Marketing for the Indian Ocean

JA Resorts & Hotels has announced the appointment of Khumar Askerova as the new Director of Sales and Marketing for the Indian Ocean region. Khumar brings with her an impressive 25 years of experience in sales and marketing within the hospitality industry, and a key appointment to the regional team.

The appointment will see Khumar overseeing sales for the company’s Indian Ocean flagship property JA Manafaru in the Maldives and two properties in the Seychelles, the boutique JA Enchanted Island and luxury villa residences at JA Enchanted Waterfront. Khumar is a seasoned sales specialist with a diverse background in the hospitality sector. Fluent in English, native in Russian and Azerbaijani, with a good command of Portuguese and Turkish, Khumar’s multilingual skills underscore her ability to connect with a global audience.

Khumar’s most recent role as the Regional Director of Sales & Marketing at COMO Hotels saw her successfully manage a portfolio of key partners, and her expertise extends to new hotel openings, where she has played pivotal roles in the launch and

success of four upper-scale Marriott hotels. Additional Maldivian experience was gained whilst Khumar was Group Director of Sales & Marketing at Lily Beach Hotels also in the Maldives, where she led a cluster team, overseeing sales, reservations, marketing, and revenue for two islands in the Maldives.

Robert El Khoury, Vice President of Sales, and Marketing at JA Resorts & Hotels comments, “We are confident that Khumar’s wealth of experience, strategic vision, and leadership qualities will contribute to the ongoing success and growth of our unique properties in the Indian Ocean. We warmly welcome her to our team and look forward to further developing our international presence with Khumar’s global expertise.”

Khumar holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration and Management from Baku State University. She has also obtained certificates in Executive Revenue Management & Strategic Pricing from the Institute of Hotel Management and eCornell Hotel Revenue Management Certificate.



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CROSSROADS Maldives Promotes Local Talent to Key Leadership Positions



Mohamed Adil - AGM - CROSSROADS Marina



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Nasrulla Ali - AGM - SAii Lagoon Maldives at CROSSROADS Maldives

CROSSROADS Maldives, the premier integrated leisure destination of the Maldives, is pleased to announce the well-deserved promotions of three local talents to the roles of Assistant General Managers. Among the key appointments is Mohamed Adil's promotion to Assistant General Manager of the CROSSROADS Marina. Since joining in 2018, Adil has exhibited exceptional leadership, playing a crucial role in the successful launch and operation of the CROSSROADS Project. Noteworthy achievements include instilling a service-oriented mindset in operations and implementing innovative practices to enhance CROSSROADS Maldives' success. Adil, the recipient of the Hospitality Leadership Award at the 2023 Maldives Tourism Awards, has significantly contributed to the growth and success of CROSSROADS Maldives, embodying a pillar of the CROSSROADS community. As CROSSROADS gears up

for a new year with a strong focus on sustainable operations and a planet-and-community-first approach, Adil's promotion reinforces the commitment to advancing these efforts.

Mufeed Abdulla, the newly promoted Assistant General Manager of the iconic Hard Rock Hotel Maldives, brings a wealth of experience garnered from various managerial roles in esteemed resorts across the Maldives. With a career spanning over the last two decades, Mufeed has consistently demonstrated his leadership capabilities, contributing significantly to the success of each property he has served. His promotion to Assistant General Manager at Hard Rock Hotel Maldives is a testament to his dedication and expertise in resort management. This promotion recognizes his unique ability to bring people together and steer a culture of

enthusiasm, passion and energy. Mufeed has been the force that weaves the Hard Rock Culture into the fabric of the daily operations of the resort that adds to its allure and fame.

Nasrulla Ali, Resort Manager of the award-winning SAii Lagoon Maldives, Curio Collection by Hilton, with a career spanning since 1994, has been promoted to Assistant General Manager. Renowned for dedication, focus on quality, and guest satisfaction, Nasru's extensive senior management experience in luxury hospitality brands, both locally and internationally, aligns seamlessly with the high standards set by Crossroads Maldives. Nasru's commitment to excellence, along with his wealth of knowledge gained from brands such as Four Seasons, One & Only, Anantara, and Coco Collection, makes him a valuable addition to the leadership team at SAii Lagoon Maldives, Curio

Collection by Hilton. The continued success of SAii Lagoon Maldives, Curio Collection, is a testament to the contributions of team members like Nasru over the years.

“We are proud to have these talented individuals as part of its leadership team and are confident that their skills and commitment will continue to elevate the guest experience across the integrated destination. The promotions highlight Crossroads Maldives' dedication to fostering local talent and providing opportunities for growth within the vibrant hospitality industry in the Maldives and we are extremely lucky to benefit from their expertise which without doubt will take CROSSROADS Maldives to new heights” said Alexander Traeger – General Manager SAii Lagoon Maldives and the CROSSROADS Marina and Frederic Lebegue – General Manager – Hard Rock Hotel Maldives.

Ibrahim Shareef Mohamed Appointed as New Managing Director at MACL

Maldives Airports Company Limited (MACL) is delighted to announce the appointment of Mr. Ibrahim Shareef Mohamed as the new Managing Director of MACL. The decision was made by the Privatization and Corporatization Board of Maldives on November 28, 2023.

With a distinguished career spanning over 36 years in public service, Mr. Shareef has held pivotal leadership positions at the state level. Some of the key roles he has undertaken include the position of Commissioner General of Customs (appointed by the president), Chairman of Transport Authority of Maldives, Chairman of Fuel Supplies Maldives Pvt Ltd, Chairman of Maldives Gas Pvt Ltd, and Chairman of Allied Insurance Company of the

Maldives Pvt Ltd . He has also served as the Chief Executive Officer of Maldives Ports Limited, an Executive Board Director of State Trading Organization plc (STO), and a Board Director of STO Hotels and Resorts Pvt Ltd. Additionally he has worked at various positions at STO for over 20 years, where he led the IT department, Business Development department, Corporate and Legal Affairs and some of the major sales departments in the company.

Most recently, Mr. Shareef demonstrated his proficiency in international business affairs as the Trade Representative of Maldives in Australia. Notably, he holds the distinction of being the first elected

board member to represent the public shareholders at Dhivehi Raajjegyeyge Gulhun Plc; Dhiraagu.

In addition to his extensive public service, Mr. Shareef is a highly educated professional, holding a Masters Degree in Commerce from Deakin University, Australia, and completed his undergraduate studies in the United Kingdom.

In his message to the staff, Mr. Shareef emphasized the crucial role of MACL in the country's economic development. He highlighted that one of his top priorities will be the completion of new facilities, especially the airport expansion project.

MACL is confident that Mr. Ibrahim



Shareef Mohamed's profound understanding of the business landscape, coupled with his recognized leadership qualities will usher MACL towards a brighter future and will strategically guide the company towards achieving success.

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DYNAMIC LEADERSHIP

with

Aishath Shimani

Director of Planning & Development,
Sun Siyam Resorts

“Encouragement is key to dispelling outdated notions that certain fields are exclusively for men. Recent positive shifts, such as women driving buses and operating ferries, indicate progress. It's vital to highlight these opportunities, showcasing successful women in various industries. The changing times call for proactive encouragement, emphasizing that women can excel in any profession.”

In this edition of the Islandchief, we delve deeply into the remarkable career of Aishath Shimani, the formidable Planning Director of Sun Siyam Resorts. From her early days navigating career choices as a high school graduate to achieving the distinction of being the first Maldivian to attain a BA (Hons) in Interior Architecture and Design, Shimani's journey resounds with unwavering passion, relentless dedication, and a resolute dismantling of stereotypes. A true pioneer in her domain, she has etched an enduring legacy by revolutionizing spaces on both local and international fronts. As the Director of Planning, Shimani's hands-on approach to steering construction projects epitomizes her unwavering commitment to excellence and underscores her belief in fostering a balanced, diverse industry. Join us on an exploration of the compelling narrative of Aishath Shimani, a visionary leader who is shaping the very fabric of luxury hospitality in the Maldives.

Could you share a bit more about your journey from studying Interior Design in Malaysia to becoming the Planning Director for Sun Siyam Resorts in the Maldives?

My path to becoming the Planning Director at Sun Siyam Resorts was anything but conventional. Originally aspiring to be a doctor, a pivotal scene during a movie changed my trajectory. Faced with the vast choices for further studies in Malaysia, Interior Design caught my eye. Despite skepticism about its prospects in the Maldives, my passion for organization and design led me to pursue it against the tide. Despite initial challenges, I excelled in my studies, earning accolades and even having my education sponsored. This propelled me into various interior design projects, opening doors to international opportunities and roles beyond design. The journey ultimately brought me back to the Maldives, where I embraced the unique challenges of turning remote islands into luxurious resorts at Sun Siyam, marking a new chapter in my career.

As a pioneer in the field of Interior Architecture and Design, how did you overcome the doubts and skepticism from society regarding your career choice?

In the face of skepticism surrounding interior design's future in the Maldives, I thrived on challenges and the desire to explore the uncharted. While many discouraged me, few explained why. I possessed an inherent curiosity to understand the

'why.' Starting out, I defied societal norms, entering male-dominated market areas for materials, braving judgment. Resort projects faced additional scrutiny, with societal norms questioning the involvement of girls. My parents, however, became my steadfast support, encouraging me to pursue my passion despite societal reservations. Their unwavering support empowered me, making me resilient to societal opinions. As I transformed bland government office interiors, the uniqueness of my designs garnered attention, slowly reshaping public perception and fostering a positive attitude towards interior designing.

Your transition from freelancing to working on a government project in the Maldives showcased your innovative approach. What inspired you to bring creativity to standard office designs and how did it impact your career?

The immigration department project marked a turning point for me, a newcomer entrusted with transforming a space solely based on client requirements. The client's unwavering trust allowed me creative freedom, emphasizing functionality over rigid design guidelines. The independence to infuse functionality with my own creative touch, coupled with the trust bestowed upon me, fueled my confidence. Pouring my passion into the project and receiving appreciation instigated a shift in the perception of interior design, creating a positive ripple effect in attitudes toward this profession.

During your time in Singapore, you played a crucial role in setting up the UNDP Global Center for Public Service Excellence. Can you share some key challenges you faced and lessons learned during that high-profile project?

Singapore's corporate landscape vastly differed from the Maldives, presenting numerous challenges in transitioning from interior design to overseeing significant projects like UNDP. The UNDP project demanded extensive involvement in the construction process, with an empty government-provided building needing completion within an ambitious three-month timeframe. Facing the absence of electricity, facilities, and even working desks, I had to navigate the complexities of managing a project virtually.

Being the first employee on the UNDP Singapore project, I found myself responsible for planning and executing the entire endeavor. The stringent rules and regulations of an international organization added an extra layer of complexity, necessitating compliance with safety protocols and regulations. The project exposed me to diverse fields, from project management and communications to shipping and procurement, requiring collaboration with various stakeholders.

Overcoming challenges such as limited resources, the absence of immediate guidance, and the need to make swift decisions, the UNDP project became a crucible of learning and growth. The experience broadened my expertise in project management, innovation incorporation, and resource optimization—a skill set directly applicable to my current work in resort projects. The demanding yet enriching nature of this experience laid the foundation for my success in navigating complex projects in the dynamic field of tourism and hospitality.

Returning to the Maldives in 2018, you took on the role of Planning Director for Sun Siyam Resorts. What specific challenges do you encounter in overseeing the construction projects for remote islands transformed into luxury properties?

Upon my return, the challenges were manifold. Initially, as the sole female worker on distant worksites, facilities were not catered to female needs such as toilets, posing a considerable challenge. The male-dominated working environment, with a team predominantly comprising Bangladeshi workers, presented its own set of difficulties. However, my team members, understanding the specific needs, worked towards creating a more inclusive and comfortable atmosphere for everyone, including females visiting the site.

Navigating construction sites was also a unique challenge, with makeshift paths, wobbly single planks across water villas, and no established pathways. Siyam World, a significant project for Sun Siyam Resorts, brought its own set of challenges. Unlike previous projects handled by the in-house construction team, Siyam World involved collaboration with a Chinese contractor, introducing new working methods and communication hurdles.

Coordinating with a foreign contractor presented challenges, exacerbated by language barriers, logistic issues, and unexpected hindrances like port congestions and weather-related delays. The Covid-19 pandemic added another layer of complexity, causing cargo delays, quality issues with materials, and disruptions to project timelines. Unpredictable weather, erosion of ports, and tidal challenges further complicated the construction process. Adapting to these dynamic factors required strategic planning, resilience, and creative problem-solving to ensure the successful transformation of remote islands into luxurious Sun Siyam Resorts.

What are your most noteworthy experiences in your current role and how do these experiences contribute to the success of your projects, and what complications have you encountered that one might not realize from an office setting?

In my current role, each project brings forth unique and valuable experiences. The nature and scale of the project determine the challenges we face. Regardless of the size or weather conditions, our primary achievement lies in successfully navigating and completing each project. The ability to adapt, especially in the face of challenges like weather disruptions and port congestions, is a crucial skill that contributes to project success.

Every project is distinct, presenting a variety of challenges that demand innovative problem-solving. The diverse experiences gained from tackling these challenges enhance our skill set and contribute to the overall success of the projects. The dynamic nature of the work ensures that no two projects are the same, providing continuous opportunities to learn, adapt, and find effective solutions. This constant evolution and variety in challenges contribute to the richness of our experiences and ultimately to the success of the endeavors we undertake.

In your leadership role, can you elaborate on how you build and foster a collaborative environment within your team?

Building a collaborative environment within the team is paramount to our success. I view the team as a family, eliminating rigid hierarchies that might hinder comfort and productivity. When facing challenges, we support each other, much like a family would during a crisis. Each team member is entrusted with specific responsibilities, and I encourage them to manage those responsibilities in their unique way, as long as the outcomes align with our quality and standards.

It's crucial to empower team members and trust them to execute tasks in their own style, fostering an environment of independence and confidence. We celebrate our achievements as a family, organizing events to create a comfortable and open atmosphere. This approach encourages team members to share concerns and ideas freely. I emphasize equal opportunities for everyone, recognizing that each person brings unique strengths to the table. By being an integral part of the team rather than a controlling figure, we can collectively contribute to the success of our projects, combining our diverse skills and experiences.

As a woman in the construction industry, what steps do you think can be taken to encourage more women to pursue careers in construction, especially in roles like yours?

Education plays a pivotal role in breaking stereotypes and promoting inclusivity. From an early age, it's essential to educate women that no profession is beyond their capabilities. Creating a supportive work environment is crucial, extending to practical aspects such as well-equipped workspaces and suitable facilities like toilets on work sites.

Encouragement is key to dispelling outdated notions that certain fields are exclusively for men. Recent positive shifts, such as women driving buses and operating ferries, indicate progress. It's vital to highlight these opportunities, showcasing successful women in various industries. The changing times call for proactive encouragement, emphasizing that women can excel in any profession.

As someone who initially stood as the sole woman in construction, I've witnessed a transformation within my team, where females now outnumber males. Sharing our experiences as women in construction becomes a powerful tool to inspire others and dismantle preconceived notions about

gender-specific roles. It's about paving the way for more women to recognize and embrace the vast possibilities within the construction industry.

Reflecting on your achievements, could you share a specific project that holds a special place in your heart and why?

In the realm of resorts, the Iruveli project stands out as something truly special for me. It marked my inaugural venture here at Sun Siyam Resorts, creating lasting memories. However, beyond resorts, the Immigration department project holds a unique place in my heart. It was my first project in the Maldives, undertaken with no prior experience, yet it turned out to be a resounding success. That achievement is etched in my memory.

Each Sun Siyam resort carries its distinctive memories and significance. Siyam World, especially, holds a special spot due to the unprecedented challenges posed by the pandemic. Dealing with new contractors and navigating uncharted territory made this project particularly memorable. Whether stationed in Siyam World or Iruveli, reflecting on the culmination of hard work and achievement brings immense joy and satisfaction.

It's important to recognize the efforts of designers, architects, engineers and construction workers behind the scenes. How can the industry better acknowledge and appreciate the contributions of these essential roles and what is your message to those hesitating to take a step towards venturing into this field?

In the dynamic world of tourism design and construction, our team often works tirelessly behind the scenes, ensuring the success of each project. Unfortunately, the limelight tends to shine on resort management and operations once the project is complete. It's disheartening, especially for our dedicated and innovative team members who contribute significantly to the company's success.

It's a common trend to see interviews and features focusing on general managers, operational managers, and F&B managers in magazines. Yet, the individuals who work diligently behind the scenes, the emerging talents, are often overlooked. The reality is, a resort wouldn't be what it is without the collective efforts of those behind the scenes.

I believe the media can play a vital role in spotlighting the unsung heroes of our projects—the young and talented individuals shaping the future of this industry. Recognizing the background team is essential, not only for their morale but also to inspire newcomers in the field.

When the hard work of these individuals is acknowledged, it serves as a driving force for continuous improvement and progress. Companies should ensure that both the operational and background teams receive the recognition they deserve for their integral roles in bringing projects to fruition.



PROPERTY HIGHLIGHTS

Furaveri Maldives Reveals New Luxury Beachfront Residence

Furaveri Maldives, famous for its massively spacious villas and residences, reveals its new two bedroom beach residence, Private Velaa Luxury Residence.

The epitome of a luxury beach getaway experience, this two-bedroom residence is perfect for families, groups of friends or couples, allowing a maximum of 6 occupants. With a spacious common area for living and dining, the outdoor terrace is expansive and comes with a large private swimming pool, deluxe poolside cabanas, sunken seating, a Maldivian-themed hut with a swing and traditional seating, all within the private garden landscape and tropical blooms. On to a side, is the private pathway for direct beach access and the turquoise lagoon.

The residence features two bedrooms with high ceilings; each with king-size bed, day bed, lounge, coffee, and tea station with a minibar leading to a wardrobe and ensuite bath. A sanctuary itself, the bathroom comes with a freestanding center stage bathtub,



indoor rain shower, double vanity, and open courtyard with an additional outdoor shower. Private Velaa Luxury Residence comes with exclusive

amenities and a private buggy service to be out and about exploring the tropical island retreat and its many offerings.

The residence is now open for bookings and stays. For more information, please visit www.furaveri.com.

Ultra-bespoke Soneva Secret Opens in January 2024



Located in Haa Dhaalu, the Maldives' most remote atoll, the debut Soneva Secret 2024 will welcome its first guests on January 10, 2024. Thirty years in the making, the Soneva Secret resort concept builds upon Soneva's experience at the forefront of exceptional hospitality, and will set a new, unmatched standard in intuitive, personalised service, exquisite private villas and unspoiled settings, surrounded by nature.

Soneva Secret 2024 features just 14 beach and overwater villas, including lagoon Crusoe Villas, accessible only by boat, and the Castaway, the Maldives' first floating villa. Each is designed in perfect harmony with the untouched natural setting, with direct access to the white sand beach or sparkling lagoon. As well as vast master suites, including a roof that slides to reveal star-strewn skies, every villa also features adjoining

bedrooms, offering ample space for families or additional guests.

Soneva's superlative service reaches new heights at Soneva Secret 2024, with a dedicated Barefoot Guardian and Barefoot Assistant for every villa, curating an utterly personalised stay and one-of-a-kind, rare experiences for every guest. The resort's 14 private chefs, one for each villa, craft bespoke menus and unique culinary journeys,

whether savoured in the privacy and comfort of the villa or enjoyed in nature at the island's most picturesque spots.

Other dining experiences will include Out of This World, a castaway dining tower, observatory and wine cellar in the lagoon, reachable by zipline; a toes-in-the-sand firepit dining experience at So Primitive; and The Living Room, the island hub and casual dining and lounge venue, which is also home to a library, boutique and Soneva's renowned ice cream, chocolate and cheese and charcuterie rooms.

Soneva Secret 2024 can be reached via a scenic 75-minute seaplane flight direct from Velana International Airport in Malé, a 40-minute seaplane flight from Soneva Fushi in the Baa Atoll, a 30-minute seaplane flight from Soneva Jani in the Noonu Atoll, or a leisurely full-day cruise from Soneva Fushi onboard Soneva in Aqua. Guests can also fly directly into Kulhudhuffushi Airport in the Haa Dhaalu Atoll and take a one-hour speedboat ride to the resort.



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EVENTS & AWARDS

Soneva Awarded the 2023 Terra Carta Seal

Luxury hospitality pioneer Soneva has been awarded the 2023 Terra Carta Seal from the Sustainable Markets Initiative. The award-winning resort brand, which has properties in the Maldives and Thailand, is built on the foundation that businesses must exist for a greater purpose than shareholder returns. Soneva recognises that luxury travel and the pursuit of rare experiences can co-exist with a deep care for the earth, the environment and its people, and continually strives to raise the benchmark for responsible tourism.

The Terra Carta Seal is awarded to companies that have demonstrated the success of a high-impact, large scale company-wide project, initiative or strategy which aligns with one or more of the Sustainable Markets Initiative’s ten Terra Carta Articles. The Articles underpin the Terra Carta, the Sustainable Markets Initiative’s guiding mandate which provides a roadmap and framework to accelerate the transition to an ambitious and sustainable future, placing Nature,

People and Planet at the heart of global value creation.

The winners were selected by a panel of global experts from the environmental, business, political and philanthropic worlds. Designed by Sir Jony Ive, the Terra Carta Seal was launched in 2021 at COP26 by His Majesty King Charles III when he was the Prince of Wales. Since its inception, the Sustainable Markets Initiative has awarded its coveted Seal to just 83 companies globally. “The Sustainable Markets Initiative’s Terra Carta Seal recognises those companies which are taking great strides in delivering real-world outcomes to create a more positive future that we can all embrace. The caliber of the projects and initiatives being driven by these companies sets the standard for us all as we push forward to a more sustainable future.

Jennifer Jordan-Saifi, CEO, Sustainable Markets Initiative, said: “The Sustainable Markets Initiative’s Terra Carta Seal recognises those



companies which are taking great strides in delivering real-world outcomes. As we stand on the eve of COP28, public, private sector and philanthropic actors will come together at the inaugural Business and Philanthropy Climate Forum to bridge the gap between ambition and action. It is an example exemplified by the 2023 Terra Carta Seal winners that are helping to inspire and lead the way.”

Recognised for its remarkable

sustainability efforts, Soneva is the only hotel brand among a select group of large global organizations that received a 2023 Terra Carta Seal. Other companies who received the 2023 Terra Carta Seal include Airbus, Carbon Clean, CDPO, DLA Piper, EY, Haier Smart Home, Hitachi, LanzaTech, Novartis, Orange, Ping An Bank, Pollination, ReNew, Robertson, Siemens Energy, and Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group, Inc.

Kuda Villingili Maldives Recognized as the Best Honeymoon Hotel 2023 by The White Awards



Kuda Villingili Maldives achieved the prestigious distinction of being named The Best Honeymoon Hotel 2023 by White Awards. This recognition, bestowed after several rounds of an

independent vetting process and careful consideration by wedding industry experts, highlights the exceptional quality of service, ambiance, and overall experience that

the resort provides for couples embarking on this special chapter of their lives.

Kuda Villingili Resort Maldives vividly depicts an idyllic tropical retreat nestled amid the turquoise waters of the North Malé Atoll. Its promise of a perfect island getaway for creating treasured memories is complemented by the highest service standards, spacious beach and water villas, and a unique culinary experience with seven different restaurants offering 11 distinctive cuisines. The resort’s convenient location, just a 30-minute speedboat ride from Male’, adds to its allure.

Kuda Villingili goes beyond offering a honeymoon haven by providing comprehensive wedding packages for couples seeking to exchange vows against the breathtaking backdrop of the azure ocean. The resort not only facilitates the ceremony but also offers a private sunset cruise, floating breakfast, romantic beach dinners, and relaxation treatments, allowing couples to celebrate their union amidst serene

surroundings.

Moreover, Kuda Villingili ensures that romantic dining experiences are elevated with various options including romantic beach dinners, private barbecues, cinema under the-stars, sunken dinners and wine library dinners, each carefully designed to create unforgettable moments. Skilled chefs craft delectable dishes, adding a touch of culinary excellence to complement the romantic ambiance. These thoughtful offerings truly enhance the overall experience, providing couples with a magical and unforgettable start to their journey together.

Deepa Manuel, General Manager, Kuda Villingili Resort, commented: “We are honored to receive this high score from the top international professionals of the wedding industry. This award is a recognition of the constant efforts, dedication, and passion of our team to provide high standards of services for honeymoon couples as well as unique opportunities for the perfect romantic escape at Kuda Villingili.”

Minister of Tourism, Honorable Ibrahim Faisal Officially Inaugurates Sustainable Tourism Forum 2023



At the Manhattan Business Hotel in Male', IMTM Pvt. Ltd. commenced the fourth edition of the Sustainable Tourism Forum (STF) 2023, bringing together stakeholders from various sectors of the tourism industry to engage in a dynamic dialogue addressing the complex challenges of social, economic, and environmental sustainability in the Maldives.

The Opening Ceremony welcomed esteemed guests, including government officials, official partners of STF 2023, NGOs, associations, resorts, guesthouses, travel agencies, dive centers, students, and attendees. Among the notable figures present were Mr. Ibrahim Faisal, the Honorable Minister of Tourism, as the Guest of Honor, and Mr. Enrico Gaveglia, the UNDP Resident

Representative in the Maldives, who delivered an insightful keynote address. Under the theme 'Green Investments and Innovation for Responsible Tourism: Paving the Path for a Greener Future,' STF 2023 explores targeted investments in upskilling, renewable energy, and climate adaptation to contribute to global sustainability.

Ms. Aishath Fara, the Events Manager, initiated the forum by celebrating the milestone achievement of submitting the policy brief from 2022 to relevant authorities, emphasizing IMTM's dedication to advocating for sustainable tourism practices. Stressing the essence of Sustainable Tourism Forum 2023, Ms. Fara expressed, "Our primary objective for Sustainable Tourism Forum 2023 is to pinpoint strategies to refine the tourism sector and establish customized sustainability benchmarks tailored specifically for the Maldives' tourism industry."

Highlighting the importance of 'Green Investments' such as sustainable infrastructure, renewable energy, and innovative practices, Ms. Fara articulated, "These investments align with the fundamental principles of responsible tourism, aiming to minimize environmental impact, support local economies, and preserve cultural authenticity, thereby anchoring a sustainable and conscientious tourism industry crucial for its continuous advancement."



ZFOLD PAPER TOWEL



SCAN FOR CATALOG

EVENTS & AWARDS

Amari Raaya Maldives Celebrates Dual Victory at LLM Readers' Travel Awards 2023

Amari Raaya Maldives announces its outstanding achievement in clinching two prestigious awards at the esteemed LLM Readers' Travel Awards 2023. The luxury resort, nestled in the pristine Raa Atoll of the Maldives, emerged victorious in the categories of "Best Beach/Coastal Hotel" and "Best Hotel for Romance."

The Maldives stands as one of the world's most romantic destinations, and Amari Raaya Maldives epitomises a romantic paradise, offering an idyllic escape for couples seeking to transcend the ordinary and reconnect. From the moment of arrival, the resort's natural beauty, luxurious accommodations, attentive service, and a plethora of romantic experiences capture the hearts of couples. Whether it's a private candlelit dinner on the beach, a serene couples' spa treatment at the resort's maai spa, a romantic sunset cruise, or simply strolling

hand-in-hand along the picture-perfect white sandy beaches, Amari Raaya Maldives curates moments that etch everlasting memories for couples, fostering intimacy and connection amidst breathtaking surroundings. Additionally, the resort's expansive island provides ample seclusion and acres of beachfront for intimate weddings and private moments.

The LLM Readers' Travel Awards, now in its sixth illustrious year, stands as a beacon in recognising excellence across the global travel industry. Showcasing the finest hotels, top-tier airlines, cruise lines, exotic destinations, and exceptional tour operators, the awards celebrate a realm of unparalleled luxury and hospitality.

Amari Raaya Maldives distinguishes itself as a haven for travelers seeking a



unique and immersive experience in the Maldives. With its sprawling island, the resort offers an array of activities both on and off the crystal-clear waters, catering to couples, families, and friends alike.

A recent addition to the resort's repertoire is the unveiling of the

extraordinary private yacht, Raaya. Spanning 20.98 meters and designed to accommodate up to 20 guests across four lavishly appointed cabins, Raaya promises an unparalleled castaway paradise experience. This luxury yacht embodies opulence, offering an exquisite blend of comfort, style, and sophistication on the open seas.

MNACI Builder Awards 2023 Recognizes the Services and Contributions of Maldives Construction and Building Industry



MNACI Builder Awards 2023 has been successfully held, recognizing the excellent service and contributions of the Maldives building and construction industry. An initiative by the Maldives National Association of Construction Industry (MNACI), Builders Awards 2023 was held on December 24, 2023 at Hotel Jen Maldives, Male'.

The inaugural edition of MNACI Builder Awards celebrated the top achievers and contributors to the construction industry through a series of strict evaluation sessions conducted by an expert independent judging panel consisting of senior government officials and veterans in the industry.

Jury panel members:

1. Mauroof Jameel (Chief Judge)
2. Adnan Haleem
3. Mariyam Eeman
4. Mahjoob Shujau
5. Ibrahim Rafeeq
6. Mohamed Azim

The week-long evaluation sessions were held at Maagiri Hotel, the hospitality partner of MNACI Builders Awards 2023.

During the ceremony, Mr. Mauroof Jameel spoke on behalf of the judges, commenting on the efforts of the Maldivian construction and building industry in enhancing their services and contribution. He said that more sub sectors in the construction industry will be regarded in the coming editions and

look forward to seeing more companies and individuals participating in the awards.

The prestigious awards were presented in 5 categories, including special recognition awards; Lifetime Achievement Award and MNACI Honorary Award 'Bodu Rasgefaanuge Lagab'.

Winners include:

- Contractor of the Year - Alia Construction and Amin Construction
- Project Delivery Award - Bison Maldives
- Cement Supplier - Villa Hakatha

Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to two winners, Mr. Mohamed Ali Janah, President, MNACI and Abdulla

Mohamed, Managing Director, Amin Construction.

Lastly, the MNACI Honorary Award 'Bodu Rasgefaanuge Lagab' was presented to HEP Dr. Mohamed Muizzu for his contributions to the Maldives construction industry. At the ceremony, MNACI emphasized that the President had achieved substantial advances in the Maldives' building sectors throughout his term as the Housing Minister and the Mayor of Malé City. His supervision oversaw the construction of the Maldives' tallest buildings, such as IGMH's 25-story building and the Hiyaa project. The first bridge in the Maldives' history, the China-Maldives Friendship Bridge, was also completed under President Dr Muizzu's supervision.

THE FUTURE REDEFINED

ZERO EMISSION - ELECTRIFYING THE WATER

Fen Water World, under the banner of Maldives Island Realty, has undergone a remarkable transformation in water sports. In recent times, the industry has enthusiastically adopted state-of-the-art products that prioritize sustainability and environmental awareness. The shift from conventional petroleum-driven watercraft to eco-friendly, battery-powered vessels has revolutionized the water sports experience, providing a more environmentally friendly and engaging encounter. This change has produced concrete outcomes, leading to a significant reduction in air and water pollution. The positive impact extends to the safeguarding of fragile ecosystems, promoting a more enduring and responsible approach to water sports.



Jetpack-Cudajet: Submerge into Uncharted Aquatic Realms

Embark on a groundbreaking journey into underwater exploration with Cudajet, the pioneering brand in underwater jetpacks worldwide. This partnership brings cutting-edge jetpack technology to the Maldives, providing enthusiasts with the opportunity to effortlessly glide beneath the water's surface. The underwater jetpacks guarantee an unforgettable experience that calls for repeated adventures.



Sea Darts-iAqua: Unveiling the Pinnacle of Aquatic Excitement

For those who seek thrills, the iAQUA SeaDart is the ultimate water toy, featuring a sleek and distinctive design that surpasses its competitors. Winning the Tried & Tested: Best Water Toy award, the SeaDart Max delivers an exhilarating performance, unparalleled features, and an undeniable element of fun. A must-have for enthusiasts of water adventures.



iAqua Nano: Commanding the Waves with Power and Elegance

Step into the domain of strength, speed, and elegance with the iAqua Nano. Featuring the revolutionary Dual Jet technology, the iAqua Neo presents a sea scooter that is lighter, swifter, and more compact than any other available. An ideal option for enthusiasts in search of an exhilarating aquatic adventure.



Wave Shark board E-foili: Precision Foiling for Adrenaline Enthusiasts

Immerse yourself in the exhilarating realm of foiling with the WaveShark Foil 2 Sport. Specifically designed for experienced foilers in search of speed and thrills, this nimble and compact board, equipped with a specialized racing fin, offers effortless maneuvering. The Sport Foil stands out as the ideal choice for individuals aiming to gracefully glide above the water, providing the ultimate experience for enthusiasts.



Awake board E-foili: Unleash the Thrill with Innovative Jet-Powered Surfing

The Awake board offers an unmatched surfing adventure, serving as the ultimate jet-powered surfboard crafted for thrill-seekers. Utilizing Awake's innovative shielded linear jet technology guarantees a potent thrust while prioritizing safety, delivering an exciting ride suitable for individuals of any weight.



Ocean Kings: Dominate the Waves with Jetcars

Embark on aquatic adventures with the revolutionary Ocean Kings Jetcar. This extraordinary vehicle enables you to smoothly navigate the waves, providing the excitement of driving a car on water. The ocean awaits as your vast playground.



Taigamotors: ORCA – Feel the Ultimate Thrills of Flying through the Water

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IN THE NEWS

Two New F&B Outlets Open at Velana International Airport's International Terminal



Two completely new food and beverage (F&B) outlets opened at Velana International Airport (VIA) international terminal. The two F&B outlets were opened by Grape Expectations and HMS Host.

The two outlets were inaugurated by CEO and MD of MACL, Ibrahim Shareef Mohamed, Grape Expectations MD, Amir Mansoor and HMS Host

Operations Manager, Sravan Patnaik at a function held at VIA departure terminal. Senior members of MACL, Grape Expectations and HMS Host were also present on the occasion.

MACL has decided to make way for the VIA International Departure Forecourt to provide more products and brands to passengers from the region and also to develop and promote the services

provided by Velana International Airport to passengers.

Thanks to the efforts of MACL, The outlet opened by Grape Expectations is the company's own brand, The Grape, and its first such outlet. HMS Host Maldives operates KFC, Costa Coffee, and Grab & Fly. The two companies have been operating restaurants at the airport since 2018.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, MACL CEO and MD, Ibrahim Shareef Mohamed said that MACL's aim has always been to provide good service to the passengers and expressed confidence that the two outlets that opened will do a good in expanding local services to the passengers

Maldives Achieves Highest Ever Tourist Arrivals with Over 1.8 Million Tourists in 2023

The Maldives has welcomed the 1.8 millionth tourist for the year 2023, successfully reaching the arrival target set for the year. Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC/ Visit Maldives) held a vibrant ceremony to mark the momentous occasion. Maldives reached this incredible milestone on December 20, 2023 with the arrival of Dutch native Mr Stefan Mathijs Hermans on flight EK652 from Dubai, UAE. This is Mr Hermans' first trip to the Maldives and he is here for a family holiday with his wife and two children. This is the first year that the Maldives has ever welcomed over 1.8 million tourists and marks the highest arrival numbers to date.

MMPRC hosted the special celebratory event at Velana International Airport to commemorate this momentous milestone, joined by representatives from the Ministry of Tourism, Maldives Airports Company Limited (MACL), Maldives Immigration, and Maldives Customs Service. The Minister of Tourism, Honourable Ibrahim Faisal joined the event in addition to the

Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director (CEO & MD) of MMPRC, Ms Fathmath Thaufeeq. The CEO & MD of MACL, Mr Ibrahim Shareef Mohamed, the Head of the Airport Division, Principal Immigration Officer of Maldives Immigration, Ms Fathimath Majidha Hassan, and the Deputy Commissioner of Customs, Mr Mahmood Riyaz also joined the event celebrating this landmark achievement.

"We are immensely proud of this achievement and remain committed to reaching the targets set for our tourism industry for next year as well. Every visitor who arrives in the Maldives has their breath taken away by the natural beauty of our nation, the warm hospitality of our people, and the unmatched variety of places to stay and things to do. We are here to make sure that everyone everywhere in the world knows that their perfect holiday is waiting for them in the Sunny Side of Life," said CEO & MD of MMPRC, Ms Fathmath Thaufeeq.



MMPRC has been continuously conducting marketing campaigns throughout the year 2023, leveraging marketing strategies and immersive promotional campaigns that showcase the unparalleled beauty and experiences that the Maldives has to offer. With its comprehensive 360-degree marketing approach, their

efforts resonated with the worldwide audience, ensuring that the Maldives as a destination remained in the spotlight throughout the year for travelers seeking unforgettable experiences. MMPRC conducted a total of 349 marketing and promotional campaigns throughout the year with a combined reach of over 6,011,389,743.

Food & Beverage Show 2024 to be Held on January 18, 19 and 20



The Food & Beverage Show, organized by Highrise Pvt Ltd, is renowned as the premier exhibition in Maldives exclusively dedicated to showcasing the finest in food and beverages, promises an unparalleled culinary experience where the attendees immerse themselves in a world of gastronomic delights, exploring innovative beverages and delectable treats that

cater to every discerning palate.

The much-anticipated 7th edition of F&B Show is set to take place on January 18, 19 and 20, 2024, with over 35 exhibitors at Central Park, Hulhumale’.

The Main Sponsor of Food & Beverage Show 2024 is BHM Traders and Co-Sponsors are MHA Pvt Ltd and



Nestle’ Professional Maldives.

Highrise Pvt Ltd, the organizer and manager of the Food & Beverage Show, is driven by passion, dedication, and over 15 years of industry expertise. Their in-house event specialists create extraordinary experiences that exceed client expectations and reflect the brilliance of the brands they represent.

Highrise invites culinary enthusiasts, professional chefs, food business owners, and everyone passionate about the world of food and beverages to visit the Food & Beverage Show. Don't miss this exceptional opportunity to experience the finest flavors, discover innovative products, and connect with industry leaders.

MACL Presents Merit Award to Four Students of CHSE

The Maldives Airports Company Limited (MACL) presented MACL Merit Award to the four outstanding students of Centre for Higher Secondary Education (CHSE), on Thursday, 7th December.

MACL Merit Award is the Company's CSR initiative which is granted to two female and two male students of CHSE who demonstrate academic excellence in grade 11 studies. The award winners received a laptop, a data package, and a monthly allowance of MVR 2,000 for one year. Additionally, award winners will get an opportunity to gain work experience and training at Velana International Airport.

A special ceremony was held at CHSE, the event senior management of CHSE and the students of grade 11 participated in the event. In this ceremony the MACL, CEO and Managing Director Ibrahim Shareef Mohamed presented the award to the students. The students who won the awards are:

1. Ibrahim Rifau
2. Hassan Layan Mohamed
3. Afaf Ahmed Musthafa
4. Aishath Eashal Ahmed Aslam

During today’s event, CEO and MD

Ibrahim Shareef Mohamed highlighted that the merit award is a part of MACL’s commitment to social responsibility, aiming to elevate education in the Maldives. Emphasizing the job opportunities at MACL, MD Shareef stated that with the ongoing development projects at VIA, a number of jobs will be created, and it is important that the students who complete CHSE join those jobs. Also, training the students for the airport job Mr. Shareef announced the internship program dedicated for the senior school students.

Speaking at the ceremony CHSE Principal Aishath Safoora acknowledged the awards significance within the school community, making the first-time students receive recognition from a company. She expressed gratitude to MACL’s senior leadership for introducing the practice at CHSE.

In addition to the MACL Merit Award, MACL has initiated cash awards for the best all-round winners at CHSE starting the academic year. In July of the current year, MACL and CHSE formalized an agreement by signing a memorandum of understating (MoU), extending the



program for three years. Aligned with MACL’s social responsibility agenda, this initiative represents a significant

step towards encouraging students and supporting the development of operational leaders for the country.

BON APPÉTIT

Lobster Bisque with Cured Butter and Bread



Maha Naseer brings a wealth of experience to the industry, channeling her expertise towards local enterprises in the tourism sector, including Villa and Sun Travels, following the completion of her academic journey. Currently, she serves as an independent consultant, extending her advisory services to resorts and restaurants within the tourism domain.

In addition to her consulting endeavors, Maha has left an indelible mark as the Secretary General of the Chefs Guild of Maldives. Her culinary skills have garnered numerous national and international accolades in recent years. Notably, Maha distinguishes herself as one of the few female executive chefs in the country, and she proudly holds the title of the first Maldivian chef to achieve the esteemed designation of Master Chef in the Maldives.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1.25kg lobster heads
- 12 lobster claw
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Small onion chopped
- Small carrot chopped
- One stick celery chopped
- 1 spring parsley
- 1 spring thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 75g tomato purée
- Cayenne pepper
- 150ml brandy
- 150ml white wine
- 1ltr fish stock
- 1ltr chicken stock
- 1ltr double cream
- Sea salt

METHOD

- Crush the lobster heads and crab bodies with a mallet until they are well broken up.
- Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan and start to roast the lobster and crab bones
- Once started to roast well, add the onion, carrot and celery and cook over low heat.
- When the vegetables are lightly browned, add the parsley, thyme and bay leaf, stirring occasionally so they don't stick.
- After about 5 minutes, stir in the tomato purée and cayenne pepper. Cook out the tomato paste, then add the brandy and wine, flambé to burn off the alcohol.
- Add the fish and chicken stock and bring up to the boil. Season lightly with sea salt. Simmer for 40 minutes, stirring occasionally and skimming off the scum.
- Add the cream and blend until smooth and pass through fine chinoisé.

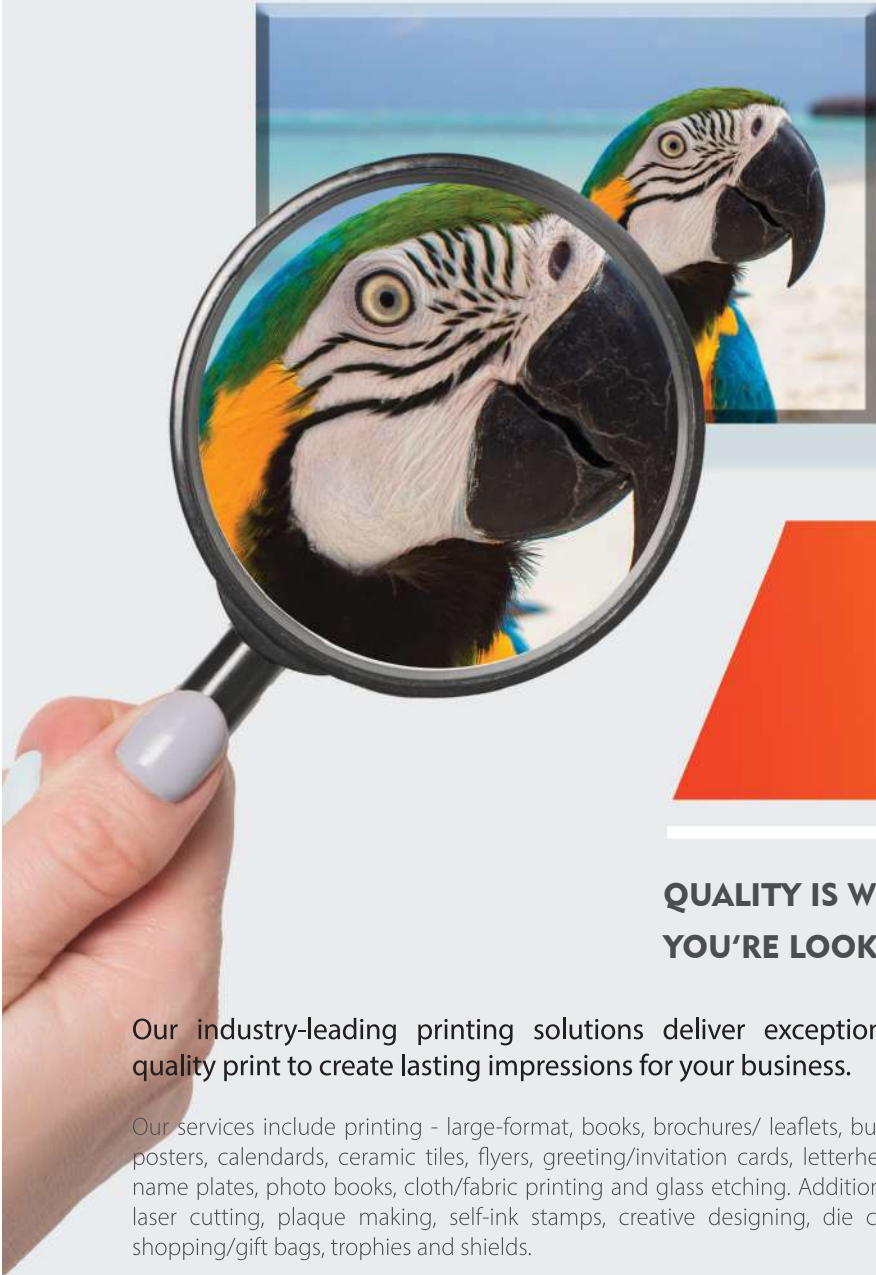


Courtesy of
Chef Maha Naseer
Executive Chef/ Freelance F&B Consultant



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Frankly Speaking

Yacht agents express worry about a decline in stopover visits to the Maldives by Passenger Liners, while the local boating industry highlights the problem of foreign yachts cruising in the Maldives without paying TGST on bookings. Passenger Liners visits and based foreign yachts cruising are two distinct matters. What is your perspective on this?



Amir Mansoor
President
National Boating Association of Maldives

Foreign yachts cruising for less than 7 days with family and friends can be considered alright. However, they cannot change crew or any passengers after entering. If not, it should be considered as commercial cruises and should pay all taxes applicable.



Ismail Hameed
Executive Board Member
National Boating Association of Maldives

I think Passenger Liners should be allowed to visit with T-GST exclusion on 1 or 2 days visit. However, for foreign boats based in the Maldives and doing check-in and check-out should be entitled fully for T-GST, Bed Tax and any other which local boats are compulsorily paying. Although the charter payment is paid through an OTA, It shouldn't be an excuse to avoid sales tax for businesses conducted in the Maldives. Some foreign vessels have been based here for more than a year.



Ahmed Zubair Adam
Managing Director
Blue Horizon Pvt Ltd

Transit Passengers on Cruise Liners should not be charged TGST for their bed & lodging..



Ibrahim Shahid
CEO and Managing Director
Blue K Safari Pvt Ltd

We are not concerned by Passenger Liners. I am content if they are paying required tax to the government. However, operating foreign yachts in the Maldives without following the imposed regulations and prolonging their visit over the tourist visa duration (30 days) is our concern. I don't think we have enough space for their operations in the central part of Maldives. Almost all the dive sites in central Maldives are overcrowded including surf grounds



Ahmed Naushad
Regional Director
JLS Yachts Maldives

I believe Passenger Liners' visits and foreign yachts cruising in Maldives will not affect the local boating community in any way as they belong to two different market segments. A decline in Passenger Liners traveling to the Maldives could result in a decrease in business for shops and establishments built by the local community, which will in turn negatively affect the local economy. Foreign yachts coming to the Maldives provide us with the level of rudimentary exposure required for us to evolve as a country in the global tourism market.



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